working with me to uphold a commitment that was made at the end of the 108th Congress that we would consider and vote on this bill. Unfortunately—again, unfortunately—their efforts have been thwarted by a handful of colleagues who have taken it upon themselves to block this bill despite the widespread support from the State of Hawaii.

After 7 years of delay by a few of my colleagues, it is time we are provided with the opportunity to debate this bill in the open. I will be coming to the floor to talk about my bill every day until we begin debate on the bill. I will use every day to talk about what my bill does and does not do and to respond to the outright untruths that have been spread about the legislation. I will use every day to help share Hawaii's history with my colleagues as the opponents of this legislation have taken it upon themselves to rewrite the tragedies of Hawaii's history in a manner that suits them for the purposes of opposing this legislation.

I am deeply saddened by their tactics, but I am committed to ensuring that the Members of this body and all of the citizens in the United States understand Hawaii's history and the importance of extending the Federal policy of self-governance and self-determination to Hawaii's indigenous peoples, the native Hawaiians.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on vote No. 115, I was necessarily absent, due to a mechanical problem with the plane on my United flight 115 from Chicago. Had I been present for that vote, I would have voted against the motion to invoke closure.

Mr. OBAMA. Mr. President, on vote No. 115—the motion to invoke cloture on the motion to proceed to S. 22—I was necessarily absent due to a delay with my flight back from Chicago. Had I been present for that vote, I would have voted against the motion to invoke cloture.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

MARINE LANCE CORPORAL STEPHEN BIXLER

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to honor the memory of Marine LCpl Stephen Bixler, of Suffield, CT, who was killed last week while serving our Nation in Iraq. He was 20 years old.

Tragically, Corporal Bixler's life was cut short when an improvised explosive device detonated while he was on patrol in Iraq's Al Anbar province. He was on his third tour of duty with the Marine Corps, having served previous tours in Haiti and Iraq. His heroic service is remembered today by a grateful nation.

Service and leadership. These are the traits that best defined Stephen Bixler—as a talented runner on his high school cross-country team and as senior patrol leader in Boy Scout Troop 260. He was awarded the rank of Eagle Scout after working hard to improve the Jesse F. Smith Memorial Forest. He decided early on in high school that he wanted to serve his country, and shortly after graduating in 2003 he joined the Marines.

Stephen returned home during the holidays last year and took the time to speak to students at his former high school about his experiences overseas and his pride in serving his country. Friends remember him as an intelligent, dedicated young man who was truly patriotic and possessed a self-confidence and leadership ability beyond his years.

All of us in Connecticut and across America owe a deep and solemn debt of gratitude to Stephen Bixler and to his family for his tremendous service to our country. On behalf of the United States, I offer my deepest condolences to Stephen's parents, Richard and Linda, his twin sister Sandra, and to everyone who knew and loved him.

ALTERNATIVE PLURIPOTENT STEM CELL THERAPIES ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. Presidemt, I have sought recognition to cosponsor and speak in support of legislation introduced by Senator SANTORUM called the Alternative Pluripotent Stem Cell Therapies Enhancement Act. This bill would authorize research into deriving stem cells using alternative methods that would not result in the destruction of a human embryo.

This legislation, which Senator SANTORUM and I have drafted in close partnership, represents a good faith effort to find common ground among those who support human embryonic stem cell research and those who do not. This bill is fully complementary to legislation that Senators HARKIN, HATCH, FEINSTEIN, SMITH, AND KENNEDY have introduced—the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005—which would allow Federal funding for research on additional human embryonic stem cell lines. It will move forward research that could potentially eliminate the objections that some have to embryonic stem cell research while achieving the same goals. However, let me be clear, this legislation is not a substitute for supporting H.R. 810, the House-passed version of the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005.

I believe medical research should be pursued with all possible haste to cure the diseases and maladies affecting Americans. In my capacity as Chairman of the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee, I have backed up this belief by supporting increases in funding for the National Institutes of Health. I have said many times that the NIH is the crown jewel of the Federal Government—perhaps the only jewel of the Federal government. When I came to the Senate in 1981, NIH spending totaled $3.6 billion. In fiscal year 2006, NIH received a little over $29 billion to fund its pursuit of life-saving research. The successes realized by this investment in NIH have spawned revolutionary advances in our knowledge and treatment for diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, mental illnesses, diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, ALS and many others. It is clear to me that Congress's commitment to the NIH is paying off. This is the time to seize the scientific opportunities that lie before us, and to ensure that all avenues of research toward cures—including stem cell research—are open for investigation.

In 1998, I learned of the discovery of human embryonic stem cells. These cells have the ability to become any type of cell in the human body. Another way of saying this is that the cells are pluripotent. The consequences of this unique property of stem cells are far-reaching and are key to their potential use in therapies. Scientists and doctors with whom I spoke—and who have since testified before my Appropriations Subcommittee at 17 stem cell-related hearings—were excited by this discovery. They believed that these cells could be used to replace damaged or malfunctioning cells in patients with a wide range of diseases, This could lead to cures and treatments for maladies such as Juvenile Diabetes, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular diseases, and spinal cord injury.

Senator HARKIN and I took the lead on making Federal funding available for this promising research. On the issue of funding human embryonic stem cell research, I along with Senators HARKIN, HATCH, FEINSTEIN, SMITH, and KENNEDY are the Senate sponsors of the Stem Cell Research Act of 2005, which we hope will soon be coming up for a vote in the Senate. That critical bill would enable Federal funding of stem cell research with new human embryonic stem cell lines.

Embryonic stem cells are derived from embryos that would otherwise have been discarded. During the course of in vitro fertilization—IVF—therapies, sperm and several eggs are combined in a laboratory to create 4 to 16 embryos for a couple having difficulty becoming pregnant. The embryos grow in an incubator for 5 to 7 days until they contain approximately 100 cells. To maximize the chances of success, several embryos are implanted into the woman. The remaining embryos are frozen for future use. If the woman becomes pregnant after the first implantation, and does not want to have more pregnancies, the remaining embryos are in excess of clinical need and can be donated for research. Embryonic stem cells are derived from these embryos—destroying the embryo in the process. This process raises concerns for some, including my distinguished colleague Senator SANTORUM.